United Nations S/PV.7925

# Security Council

Seventy-second year

*Provisional*

**7925**th meeting
Thursday, 13 April 2017, 10.55 a.m.
New York

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| *President*: | Ms. Sison | (United States of America) |
| *Members*: | Bolivia (Plurinational State of) | Mr. Fernández Revollo |
| | China | Mr. Wu Haitao |
| | Egypt | Mr. Aboulatta |
| | Ethiopia | Mr. Alemu |
| | France | Mr. Lamek |
| | Italy | Mr. Lambertini |
| | Japan | Mr. Kawamura |
| | Kazakhstan | Mr. Umarov |
| | Russian Federation | Mr. Iliichev |
| | Senegal | Mr. Ciss |
| | Sweden | Mr. Skoog |
| | Ukraine | Mr. Fesko |
| | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland | Mr. Rycroft |
| | Uruguay | Mr. Bermúdez |

## Agenda

The situation in Somalia

Briefing by the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 751 (1992) and 1907 (2009) concerning Somalia and Eritrea

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.55 a.m.*

**Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

**The situation in Somalia**

**Briefing by the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 751 (1992) and 1907 (2009) concerning Somalia and Eritrea**

**The President**: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Djibouti, Eritrea and Somalia to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by His Excellency Mr. Kairat Umarov, Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan, in his capacity as Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 751 (1992) and 1907 (2009) concerning Somalia and Eritrea.

I now give the floor to Ambassador Kairat Umarov.

**Mr. Umarov** (Kazakhstan): As mandated by paragraph 11 (g) of resolution 1844 (2008), I have the honour to brief the Security Council in my capacity as the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 751 (1992) and 1907 (2009) concerning Somalia and Eritrea, covering the period from November 2016 to February 2017.

I would like to take this opportunity to most sincerely thank my predecessor Ambassador Ramírez Carreño of Venezuela for his able leadership and hard work during the past two years. Today, my briefing will focus on the activities of the Committee and on the assessment of recent developments, based on the most recent reports of the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea.

During the reporting period, with regard to the arms embargo on Somalia, the Committee received two notifications pursuant to paragraph 11 (a) of resolution 2111 (2013) and two notifications pursuant to paragraph 10 (g) of resolution 2111 (2013). The Committee also held three informal consultations. On 16 December 2016, the Committee was briefed by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) on transnational terrorist threats in the IGAD region. On 20 January, the Chair introduced the seven newly appointed members of the Monitoring Group to the Committee. The members presented their plan of activities for the new mandate. In particular, the Group intends to focus its efforts on investigating violations of the arms embargoes and to expand its reporting on the strength, structure and financing of armed groups in the region. The coordinator of the Monitoring Group indicated the Group's intention to maintain its close working relationship with the newly elected federal Government of Somalia.

According to the latest update of the Monitoring Group to the Committee, Al-Shabaab remains the most significant threat to peace and security in Somalia. Despite the successful eviction of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)/Da'esh faction from the port town of Qandala by the Puntland security forces in December 2016, the Group reported that this terrorist organization continues to maintain its presence in the surrounding mountainside.

The assessment of the Monitoring Group that Al-Shabaab is a very critical threat to the stability of the region was also confirmed by representatives of IGAD during the briefing on 16 December 2016. They also stated that no ideological rapprochement between ISIL/Da'esh and Al-Shabaab has been observed.

With regard to the arms embargo, the Monitoring Group reported that the interim Juba administration and African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) contingents discovered approximately 25,000 blank-firing pistols on board the SJ African vessel, docked in the port of Kismayo. With full coordination between the interim Juba administration, AMISOM and Monitoring Group arms experts, the Group is continuing its investigation in order to establish the origin of the cargo and its intended destination.

In the light of the ongoing drought, the Monitoring Group reported that the hindering of humanitarian assistance can result in additional threats to the peace, security and stability of Somalia. The Federal Government of Somalia pledged to ensure the removal of all impediments to the delivery of assistance. The willingness of federal and regional leaders to uphold their commitments as well as the international community's determination to implement the operational plan for a pre-famine scale-up of humanitarian assistance in January-June 2017 will be vital for saving lives and preserving stability and security in Somalia.

The Group also remains concerned about the threat to peace and security posed by illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in Somalia. With respect to the charcoal ban, it remained unclear to what extent Al-Shabaab was involved in the illicit export of charcoal from Somalia. However, the Monitoring group noted a possible tactical shift away from Al-Shabaab's self-declared ban on trading in charcoal while taking note of significant activity at the charcoal stockpiles in Kismayo and Bur Gabo.

Furthermore, I would like to acknowledge the timely receipt of the letter dated 30 March 2017 from the Permanent Mission of Somalia transmitting the report of the Federal Government of Somalia pursuant to paragraph 7 of resolution 2317 (2016), on the structure, composition, strength and disposition of its security forces, including the status of regional and militia forces.

Turning to Eritrea, pursuant to the Monitoring Group's final report of October 2016 that it had found no conclusive evidence of Eritrean support for Al-Shabaab, the Group reported on ongoing investigations into support for armed groups as well as into potential breaches of the arms embargo. Additionally, the Group continues to seek clarification on combatants missing in action since the Djibouti-Eritrean border clashes.

With regard to the upcoming review of sanctions on Eritrea, the Monitoring Group intends to prioritize investigations on Eritrea in its midterm update in order to provide the Committee and the Council with a comprehensive account of Eritrea's compliance with the Council's measures, which would then feed into the review. The Coordinator will present the Group's midterm update to the Committee on 21 April.

Achieving sustainable global peace is impossible without achieving full peace and security in Africa and the Horn of Africa in particular. Severely affected by conflict, the region demands a high proportion of United Nations peacekeeping resources. In this vein, during the reporting period, the Chair has been engaged with members of the Committee as well as concerned Member States on a possible visit of the Chair to the Horn of Africa.

Finally, as the new Chair of the Somalia and Eritrea sanctions Committee, I am committed to working on an open, transparent and objective basis with all the members of the Committee and beyond towards national reconciliation and the restoration of peace in the Horn of Africa.

**The President**: I thank Ambassador Umarov for his briefing.

I now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

**Mr. Rycroft** (United Kingdom): I wish to thank you, Madam President, for having convened this meeting and for maintaining the Security Council's focus on preventing conflict in Africa. I also thank Kairat for his comprehensive briefing as Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 751 (1992) and 1907 (2009) concerning Somalia and Eritrea, and for his tireless efforts to advance the work of the Committee since he took on the role.

As he has reminded us, Al-Shabaab remains a vicious threat to security in Somalia and indeed to the region. The sanctions regime remains in place to reduce that threat from Al-Shabaab and to tackle threats to peace and security. It does so first through the arms embargo. The regime makes it harder for illicit weapons to flow into Somalia, and it supports the Federal Government of Somalia to establish robust arms and ammunition management, accountability and transparency.

These are key elements in wider security-sector reform, which is both essential and urgent to help make progress on this vital issue. In May, the United Kingdom will host the London Somalia conference, co-chaired by the Secretary-General and the Federal Government of Somalia. We will accelerate progress of security and agree the new international partnership needed to keep Somalia on track towards increased peace and prosperity by 2020. Central to this is continuing the battle against Al-Shabaab.

But as several Security Council members said during the peacekeeping debate convened by the United States presidency last week (see S/PV.7918), we cannot defeat armed groups through military means alone. The political progress made by Somalia in 2017 has laid the essential foundations for peace, stability and growth, which will be so vital to ensuring that Al-Shabaab's support is choked off at the political and economic levels, as well as through the restrictions of the sanctions regime, which denies Al-Shabaab its revenue streams.

The sanctions regime cuts off Al-Shabaab's funding. It preserves Somalia's natural resources for the benefit of its people and Somalia's economic empowerment, it tackles spoilers to Somalia's political progress, and it helps to support the development of Somalia's security forces. In this way, this regime supports the Federal Government of Somalia's fight against Al-Shabaab alongside the bravery and sacrifice of the troops of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM).

Now more than ever, Somalia needs our continued support. The consequences of the drought in Somalia are far-reaching, and we must all take action now to address the humanitarian crisis and preserve the political and security gains that have been made since 2012.

Turning to Eritrea, I would like to commend the Chair for his great efforts and those of his team for their work to engage with the Government of Eritrea since assuming the role. The United Kingdom continues to urge the Government of Eritrea to comply with its international obligations, including compliance with the Chapter VII resolutions of the Council. We welcome the increased engagement by Eritrea with United Nations human rights mechanisms, and we continue to urge Eritrea to engage with the Committee, its Monitoring Group and the Council.

We should also recall that some serious outstanding issues remain. First, the ongoing mediation by Qatar is vital to ensuring that all Djiboutian combatants missing as a result of the 2008 conflict, including the bodies of any who have died, are accounted for and their families given all the information available.

Secondly, the ongoing refusal by the Government of Eritrea to cooperate with the Monitoring Group, including by allowing them to visit Eritrea, means that we have no way of verifying the Group's lack of evidence for Eritrean support for Al-Shabaab or of understanding the concerns about support for other regional armed groups. We hope that, by the time of the review of the sanctions on Eritrea, due following the midterm report of the Monitoring Group, the Council will have some positive momentum to reflect on. To that end, we encourage Eritrea to take the opportunity for engagement, which the Council is once again offering.

**Mr. Lamek** (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by thanking, Ambassador Umarov, Chair of the Committee pursuant to resolutions 751 (1992) and 1907 (2009) concerning Somalia and Eritrea, for his statement and, through him, the Somalia and Eritrea Monitoring Group for its latest report and investigative work. In all their aspects, sanctions help support our political goals, and it is therefore our view that they are an important and necessary tool for the Security Council.

With regard to Somalia, I will address three points.

First, I would like to underscore that the fight against the terrorist groups in Somalia, Al-Shabaab and Da'esh, remains a priority and must involve more Somali and local forces. We welcome the work, achievements and territory won by the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) since 2007, and take note of the Mission's desire for a planned and coordinated withdrawal. It is now important that the Somali authorities quickly adopt a national security architecture that reflects the Federal structure in Somalia.

The development of a Somali security solution is our priority. The goal is to establish Somali armed forces and police capable of progressively taking charge of the struggle against Al-Shabaab and stabilizing the territories that have been retaken, thereby taking over from the AMISOM. That is the rational of the ongoing reviews, which we support. In that effort, the involvement of regional forces is crucial. We are encouraged by the success of the Puntland forces against Da'esh. The misappropriation of funds and corruption within the Somali army and the non-payment of troops highlighted by the report of the Monitoring Group must spur us to remain demanding with regard to such issues and strengthen the training and professionalization of the Somali security forces.

Secondly, in Somalia as elsewhere the numerous violations of human rights and of international humanitarian law are unacceptable. All those violations are equally reprehensible, particularly so in the case of human rights violations committed by the Somali security forces and the international forces that enjoy international support. If combating terrorism is our priority, it must be done while respecting human rights. It is a matter of principle, but it is also a question of effectiveness, because a military response by the authorities, with AMISOM's support, will succeed only if it enjoys the support of the Somali population. That is why we support the recommendations of the Monitoring Group aimed at promoting better respect for human rights and international humanitarian law by all stakeholders.

Finally, I would like to underline that the ongoing drought in the region, which is threatening millions of lives, calls for an urgent and determined humanitarian response. France has voluntarily contributed an additional €1.6 million to support the work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for the benefit of people in situations of forced displacement, of which €1 million is earmarked for food aid. Obstacles to the distribution of humanitarian aid, some of which are the responsibility of United Nations partners, especially at the local level, must cease immediately, as the Chair of the Committee said earlier.

Turning to Eritrea, we welcome the apparent lack of support for Al-Shabaab, but it is now incumbent on Eritrea to increase cooperation with the Security Council in line with the principle of cooperation with all United Nations mechanisms, including in particular by inviting the United Nations Monitoring Group to visit and confirm the lack of support for Al-Shabaab starting from Asmara. Such a step would be a sign of a clear desire on the part of Eritrea to move forward and be released from the embargo regime that it has known for eight years.

We must not forget that the embargo regime is also a response to the unresolved issue of Djiboutian prisoners. France welcomes the release of four military Djiboutian prisoners who had been detained in Eritrea since 2008. It is now time to clarify the fate of the other Djiboutian soldiers who remain missing, according to authorities in Djibouti, and address the border issue. With regard to those issues, the Eritrean authorities have everything to gain in providing comprehensive clarifications so as to normalize relations with Djibouti.

Today, 13 April, also marks the fifteenth anniversary of the decision of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission regarding the delimitation of the border between Ethiopia and Eritrea. Like the European Union, France is committed to that decision and encourages all measures that will make it possible to move forward on demarcating the border in compliance with the 2002 decision. France, along with the European Union, is ready to support such a process so as to establish conditions for peaceful relations between neighbouring countries.

In conclusion, the Chair of the Committee can count on France's continued support. I would like once again to commend his work and the Monitoring Group for its periodic and quality reports, and to reiterate France's confidence in the usefulness of his mandate.

**Mr. Ciss** (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): First and foremost, the Senegalese delegation would like to thank Ambassador Kairat Umarov, Chair of the Committee pursuant to resolutions 751 (1992) and 1907 (2009) concerning Somalia and Eritrea, for his briefing and congratulate him on the outstanding manner in which he is coordinating the work of the Committee.

My delegation would also like to congratulate the new members of the Somalia and Eritrea Monitoring Group, whose high-quality monthly updates enable us to better understand the situation in Somalia and Eritrea.

With regard to Somalia, the persistent concerns raised in the successive reports of the Monitoring Group illustrate the considerable challenges that the security situation in Somalia continues to pose. Through its presence and harmful actions, Al-Shabaab continues to pose a threat in its continued occupation of large parts of the territory and in carrying out attacks, thereby rendering the country's security situation even more complex — following the satisfactory conclusion of an electoral process last February with the election of His Excellency Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed Farmajo as the new President of the Federal Government.

The attacks carried out on 9 and 10 April in Mogadishu attest to the difficult security situation. One of those attacks targeted the head of the Somali National Army and resulted in several deaths and injuries. Through me, Senegal once again condemns those acts, offers its condolences to the Somali people and the bereaved families, and wishes a speedy recovery to the wounded. My delegation takes this opportunity to congratulate once again the Somali National Army and the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), whose tireless vigilance enabled the Chief of the Army to escape the attack.

Senegal is also concerned about the threat posed by the growing presence of the Islamic State in the region as illustrated by the 8 February operation carried out against a hotel by the small faction led by Sheikh Abdulqadir Mumin, which has claimed allegiance to the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). It is worth noting that despite the successful ouster by the Puntland forces of the ISIL faction in Qandala in December 2016, the group continues to maintain a strong presence in the surrounding mountains. Accordingly, the Senegalese delegation would like to reiterate its conviction that

only the full cooperation of the States of the region, through the regional frameworks and mechanisms established for this purpose, can enable a coordinated, and therefore lasting, response to the problem of Al-Shabaab and other terrorist groups that undermine the region.

With regard to the arms embargo, the Monitoring Group reported on the discovery on 23 January of approximately 25,000 blank firing pistols by the Interim Jubba Administration and contingents of AMISOM on board the vessel the *SJ African* in Kismayo. We welcome the cooperation of those responsible from the Interim Jubba Administration and AMISOM and the weapons experts of the Monitoring Group who were able to gain access the container and who are working to determine the origin and destination of these weapons. We also note that the Group expressed concern about the threat to peace and security posed by illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in Somalia, as reflected in its latest report, the presence of seven trawlers near Bosaso, which provoked demonstrations by local fishermen in February.

With respect to the attacks on humanitarian workers, the hijacking of aid and the obstacles to its delivery, we firmly condemn all of them, whoever the perpetrators might be. My delegation therefore calls for a substantial reform of security in the country and the eradication of corruption that can be found in many sectors of activity.

With regard to the ban on the sale of charcoal, we note with satisfaction the progress made in the implementation by Member States of the measures taken to this end. However, illegal export of charcoal continues, unfortunately, with the use of different methods to facilitate evasion, in particular, the counterfeiting of customs documentation. It should also be noted that although Al-Shabaab is no longer involved in the charcoal trade, it nevertheless continues to levy taxes on its production and transport. It is therefore appropriate to ask AMISOM to redouble its efforts to help the Somali Federal Government to prevent the export of charcoal and facilitate the Monitoring Group's access to the coal-export ports, including, if necessary, the provision of means of transport and any other appropriate security measures.

Regarding Eritrea, the delegation of Senegal would like to once again invite the country to work more closely with the Monitoring Group to create the conditions that could lead to the lifting of sanctions.

In conclusion, we reiterate our encouragement to the State of Qatar, which, in its capacity as mediator, spares no effort to resolve the differences between Djibouti and Eritrea, particularly with regard to the latent question of the remaining missing persons.

**Mr. Illichev** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We listened very carefully to the briefing by the Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan, Mr. Kairat Umarov, on the activities carried out by the Committee pursuant to resolutions 751 (1992) and 1907 (2009) concerning Somalia and Eritrea. We thank him for his very skilful leadership of this subsidiary body of the Security Council.

We share the view that the situation in the area of security on Somalia remains difficult. In this regard, we note the decision made by the President of Somalia, Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed, to call, on 6 April, a state of emergency and a 60-day amnesty for the Al-Shabaab fighters who agree to lay down their weapons. The reason for taking these initiatives was a number of terrorist acts in the capital and in the region, as well as the renewal of pirate attacks on foreign merchant ships off the shores of the country. We are also concerned by the fact that peaceful civilians are increasingly becoming the victims of terrorist attacks. In this regard, we note with satisfaction that, in the context of the yearly rotation of military personnel in Somalia, on 8 April, a new contingent, consisting of 5,700 troops, arrived from Uganda to ensure security in the country.

We are in favour of ensuring that the international community continues to take measures to increase the fighting capacity of the Somali National Army and the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), because they bear the main burden of fighting Al-Shabaab. We need to react to and follow very closely the humanitarian situation in Somalia, which has become very difficult. We know that a few regions are now facing the threat of famine. At the same time, we must also note that the successful election in Somalia is a very important milestone on the path towards national reconciliation, rebuilding Government institutions and creating democratic institutions. We expect that the Federal Government will work actively to settle the domestic political situation and develop the country socially and economically.

We are in favour of strengthening the sanctions regime in Somalia, strictly adhering in particular to the arms and charcoal embargoes, including the monitoring of areas off the shores of Somalia and extending assistance to the authorities by AMISOM in this sphere, as provided for in resolution 2317 (2016). We believe that such an embargo is a key instrument for ensuring that the extremist forces in the country do not receive additional assistance. We have had good experience with the practice of partially lifting the embargo on providing weapons to the Somali armed forces at the request of the Federal Government.

With regard to the international restrictions on Eritrea, we think that what we should be discussing is not lifting but rather optimizing the sanctions that would be helped bythe development of a relevant road map, especially since the criteria for introducing sanctions cannot be confirmed by the Monitoring Group. We note that the Group is discussing Asmara's alleged interference in the internal affairs of Djibouti and Ethiopia. This information needs to be carefully checked.

In conclusion, we would like to point out that any sanctions regime is not a dogma but something that needs to be adapted to changing realities and periodically reconsidered to see whether it is still in line with the reasons that created it initially.

**Mr. Aboulatta** (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I should like to express my sincere thanks to the Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan for his comprehensive briefing on the activities of the Committee pursuant to resolutions 751 (1992) and 1907 (2009) concerning Somalia and Eritrea. I would also like to express our appreciation to him for his objective and professional leadership of the Committee. He has sought to be effective in promoting stability and security in the Horn of Africa. Egypt expresses its full support for such efforts, as well as for the Monitoring Group. It is important to expand international and regional efforts to confront the threats the countries of the region are currently facing.

As for the situation in Somalia, despite the positive developments in the recent period, including successful parliamentary and presidential elections and the peaceful transfer of power to the new President, the activities of Al-Shabaab and other terrorist groups continue to be a major obstacle on the road to building peace and completing the rebuilding of State institutions. Efforts must be at made to confront these groups in order to reveal the sources of their arms financing. These groups must also be challenged through a strict implementation of the arms embargo imposed by the Security Council. The Monitoring Group must inquire into any breaches of the embargo. At the same time, the reform of the Somali national security forces must continue apace and not be impeded.

As for the sanctions on Eritrea, I should like to pay tribute to the successive reports of the Monitoring Group to the effect that there is no evidence of Eritrean support for Al-Shabaab. Egypt has a principled position on sanctions. Sanctions are not an end in themselves but a measure to be resorted to in exceptional circumstances for a specific period of time in order to achieve particular political objectives. It is therefore important to periodically review such sanctions so as to ensure that they are commensurate with the situation on the ground. Sanctions may be lifted as long as the conditions imposed by the Security Council are met.

Egypt looks forward to the midterm report of the Monitoring Group, in accordance with resolution 2317 (2016) concerning sanctions against Eritrea. There must be better cooperation between Eritrea and the Monitoring Group. Constructive dialogue among all regional parties is important in order to reach solutions to the region's conflicts. Let me also stress the importance of a speedy and final settlement of the issue of Djibouti's missing personnel, which has humanitarian dimensions that cannot be ignored. Egypt therefore stresses the need for the parties to step up their efforts to that end.

We express our support for the Monitoring Group, whose members must be objective and professional in seeking the truth regarding the implementation of the sanctions regime. Furthermore, the principle of equitable regional representation must be respected in the establishment of such groups. There must be an appropriate African presence in the Group of highly qualified experts with skills and an understanding of the situation in the region.

Finally, we support Kazakhstan's chairmanship of the Committee and thank it for its efforts to attain peace and security in the Horn of Africa.

**Mr. Wu Haitao** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I would like to thank the United States for convening this meeting. I would also like to congratulate Ambassador Umarov on assuming the chairmanship of

the Committee pursuant to resolutions 751 (1992) and 1907 (2009) concerning Somalia and Eritrea. China will actively support his work.

At present, the situation in Somalia is seeing positive developments. The Federal Government of Somalia is committed to advancing the political process and national reconstruction, and has achieved positive results. China commends the African Union and countries of the region for their contributions to combatting Al-Shabaab. We call on the international community to help Somalia's statebuilding and support the efforts of the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) and the Somali National Army to counter terrorism in order to achieve peace and stability in the Horn of Africa as soon as possible.

The Horn of Africa has great geopolitical significance. The countries of the region have interconnected interests and are all tasked with attaining economic development and achieving better livelihoods for their people. Those goals require a peaceful and stable regional environment. China hopes that the countries of the region will promote the overall peace and stability of the Horn of Africa, as well as the fundamental interests of its peoples. They should strengthen good-neighbourly and friendly relations, conduct pragmatic cooperation, resolve disputes through dialogue and consultations and jointly address the threat of terrorism, in line with their common interests.

It has always been China's position that sanctions are not an end in themselves but contribute to the process of achieving a political solution. Sanctions should be adjusted based on developments on the ground. China hopes that the Somalia-Eritrea Monitoring Group will strictly adhere to its mandate bestowed to it by the Council. We hope that it conducts its work in an objective and impartial manner. The Group should strengthen its communication with all parties and issue a report based on solid, credible information in order to play a constructive role in achieving peace and stability in the Horn of Africa.

China firmly supports Somalia's peace process and has provided the best possible assistance to AMISOM and the countries of the Horn of Africa in their peace processes. We are ready to work with the international community in order to continue making our due contributions to peace, stability and development in the Horn of Africa.

**Mr. Skoog** (Sweden): Let me begin by thanking the Ambassador of Kazakhstan, Mr. Umarov, for his briefing and the excellent work he is doing in his capacity as Chair of the Committee pursuant to resolutions 751 (1992) and 1907 (2009) concerning Somalia and Eritrea. We highly value the work done by the Chair, the Committee and the Somalia-Eritrea Monitoring Group. This is part of our wider effort to bring peace, stability and prosperity to the Horn of Africa.

As the Chair has pointed out, global peace and security cannot be achieved without resolving the disputes and conflicts in the Horn of Africa. In this regard, we would like to draw attention to the statement issued today by the European Union on the 15-year anniversary of the decision by the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission on the delineation of the border between the two countries.

We had the opportunity last month to welcome the successful conclusion of the electoral process in Somalia and to hear directly from President Farmajo (see S/PV.7905). We acknowledged then that strengthening the national security sector must now be a top priority for the new President and Government. Sweden shares the assessment of the Monitoring Group that Al-Shabaab remains the most significant threat to security in Somalia. If we are to build on recent progress, sustained engagement by the Council will be vital. As the Government of Somalia turns its attention to building a credible and effective national security sector, the Monitoring Group will be an essential tool for our support to these efforts, and to the Government, in particular with regard to the partial lifting of the arms embargo.

We remain deeply concerned about the severe humanitarian situation caused by the drought in Somalia and the region. In addition to the direct human impact, the effects of the drought have potential negative implications for peace and security. In order to respond to the needs of the five million people already suffering from acute food shortages, immediate safe and unhindered humanitarian access to effectively support the relief effort is essential. The reports of the Monitoring Group on humanitarian access contribute to keeping the Council informed of the situation on the ground, as does its accounts of violations and abuses of international humanitarian law and human rights law. We particularly welcome the Monitoring Group's reporting on sexual and gender-based violence, including on steps taken to end impunity.

We note the report of a possible breach of the arms embargo. It is important that this incident be thoroughly investigated. We would also note the need for continued vigilance regarding any possible exploitation of natural resources by Al-Shabaab.

Turning to Eritrea, we are encouraged by the fact that the Monitoring Group, in consecutive reports, has found no evidence of Eritrean support for Al-Shabaab. It is essential that Eritrea cooperate in a constructive manner with the Monitoring Group in order to allow them to verify this finding conclusively. Sweden supports the efforts of the Chair to facilitate a way forward regarding access for the members of the Monitoring Group to Asmara, and believe a visit by the Chair could be a helpful step. We hope that 2017 can be a positive year for engagement between the Monitoring Group and Eritrea. Constructive engagement with the Monitoring Group is in everyone's interest. We encourage the Somali and Eritrean authorities to strengthen relations with the Group, which can help reinforce a positive trajectory for the Horn of Africa. Sweden will continue to give its full support to the group's work in the year ahead.

**Mr. Fesko** (Ukraine): Let me begin by expressing Ukraine's deep and sincere condolences to the families of the victims, as well as to the Federal Government of Somalia, regarding recent terrorist attacks carried out by Al-Shabaab that resulted in numerous casualties among the civilian population, including women and children. This is just another confirmation that Al-Shabaab remains the most significant threat to peace and security in Somalia, as was characterized in Ambassador's Umarov's briefing, for which we are thankful.

In the context of an ongoing drought, Al-Shabaab activities hamper joint efforts to provide the much-needed humanitarian response. In that regard we welcome the plan of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and the Federal Government of Somalia to secure main supply roads and to help facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid to drought-stricken communities in the country. We also support cooperation between the Somali National Army and AMISOM troop-contributing countries in the fight against terrorism. In that respect we would like to commend the Kenya Defence Forces for their successful operations on 2 and 26 March, in which a total of 84 Al-Shabaab militants were eliminated.

We note that some progress has been made by the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 751 (1992) and 1907 (2009) concerning Somalia and Eritrea, as well as by the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea, to ensure the goals set out in their respective mandates led to a significant improvement in arms and ammunition management in the country and a decrease in illicit exports of charcoal from Somalia. Better-coordinated cooperation in that regard by the Federal Government of Somalia, including through its timely and comprehensive notifications to the Committee, has been an important factor, contributing to the effective implementation of the sanctions regime in Somalia.

We believe that additional joint efforts to ensure the full and effective implementation and enforcement of the arms embargo and charcoal ban will substantially limit illegal arms trafficking within and outside of the country, and will curb the illicit charcoal trade, thus depriving terrorist groups of potential revenues and weapons. We welcome the active involvement of all international partners, Member States and international and regional organizations in providing relevant support to that end. African Union cooperation has been remarkable in that regard, particularly through AMISOM's documentation and registry of all military equipment discovered and captured, as well as through its assistance to the Somali federal authorities in implementing the charcoal ban.

Another issue of concern for us is the spate of attacks on commercial vessels off the coast of Somalia, which highlights an increase in pirate activity in the Gulf of Aden. There are signs that the emergence of piracy could be the result of the financing of pirates by entities from countries in the region. In that regard, we would like to ask the Monitoring Group to follow up on that information and to provide the findings in the midterm update to the Committee. We consider that information crucial to the prevention and countering of piracy and armed robbery at sea. Furthermore, detailed information on illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing should be included in the next report of the Monitoring Group.

We cannot fail to mention the recent positive changes in the Somali State- and peacebuilding processes. The peaceful elections of the President and of the speakers of both Houses of the Somali Parliament, followed by the unanimous endorsement of the country's new Prime Minister, all resulting in an unprecedented cross-clan support and community reconciliation, were important

steps towards Somalia's recovery and stabilization. We hope that the newly appointed Council of Ministers of Somalia will succeed in fulfilling its pledges to rebuild the security forces and State institutions, tackle corruption and unify the country.

With regard to Eritrea, we take note that no evidence of Eritrean support for Al-Shabaab was reported. At the same time, we are perplexed that in some reports of the Monitoring Group, information about Eritrea's implementation of Council measures is limited to only sentence. In that regard, we look forward to seeing a comprehensive overview of this matter in the midterm update. We proceed from the understanding that constructive cooperation of the Eritrean Government would contribute to effective implementation of the Group's mandate, which is a precondition for any changes to the sanctions regime. In that regard we support the work of the Chair of the Committee to prepare a possible visit to the Horn of Africa and underline the importance of including the Coordinator of the Monitoring Group in such a delegation, with a view to strengthening the result-oriented nature of the visit.

**Mr. Kawamura** (Japan): Japan deeply appreciates Kazakhstan's active leadership as the Chair of the Committee pursuant to resolutions 751 (1992) and 1907 (2009) concerning Somalia and Eritrea. Japan also commends the work of the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea.

Japan extends its full support to President Farmajo as Somalia charts a new course towards peace and prosperity. Many challenges lie ahead, including the need for a national security framework and a representative Somali National Army. There is also the importance of combating Al-Shabaab, building a solid budgetary base through federal State mechanisms and facilitating universal suffrage in 2020. Al-Shabaab, in particular, continues to pose a grave threat to the peace and security of Somalia. The sanctions regime, which includes an exception for the Government of Somalia, remains an effective measure. The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) has also been key in combating extremist groups, including Al-Shabaab. Japan looks forward to the Somali National Army taking responsibility for the security of the country, including through agreement on the security framework among regional leaders. The London Somalia conference in May would be a perfect opportunity to build political will among Somali leaders, as well as among the international community.

The ongoing famine poses an imminent threat to progress in State-building since the establishment of the Government in 2012. Since January, Japan has provided more than $30 million in humanitarian and security assistance. Japan welcomes the willingness of the Federal and regional Governments to remove all impediments to humanitarian access and hopes that such commitments are implemented fully.

In addition, recent reports of the hijacking of commercial vessels off the coast of Somalia highlight the need for continued international counterpiracy efforts in the region. Japan will continue its warning and surveillance activities and escort operations, while also supporting social services and economic development in the coastal regions. The international community should also bolster its support to the Government of Somalia to address illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

Concerning Eritrea, we hope to see progress in locating combatants missing in action since the Djibouti-Eritrean border clashes.

Also, Japan attaches importance to the visits by the Chair of the Sanctions Committee and the coordinator of the Monitoring Group to Eritrea. We strongly hope that the Eritrean Government will accept such a visit in the near future. Japan looks forward to the midterm update by the Monitoring Group to review measures on Eritrea.

**Mr. Bermúdez** (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): Uruguay thanks Ambassador Kairat Umarov, Chair of the Committee pursuant to resolutions 751 (1992) and 1907 (2009) concerning Somalia and Eritrea, for his briefing. My Government appreciates the work carried out by the Committee, as well as its assessment of recent developments, based on the reports of the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea. Somalia is at a decisive and historic moment on the path towards the consolidation of a democratic, inclusive, stable State with full powers.

According to the information provided by the Monitoring Group, the terrorist group Al-Shabaab constitutes the main threat to peace and security in Somalia and the region. That is why strengthening the security sector in Somalia is both vital and urgent; it would allow the country to fight effectively against

that threat. The Government of Somalia and the international community should work more closely and in a more coordinated manner, prioritizing capacity-building for Government consolidation and creating the basic conditions of governance, security and services for local populations. In addition, the Government should seek to maintain a closer work relationship with the Monitoring Group. The intention of the Group is to maximize efforts to investigate violations of the arms embargo and to expand its capacity to report on the structure, strength and financing of armed groups in the region.

Another urgent issue is responding to the worsening humanitarian crisis and the famine in Somalia, which could roll back recent political achievements. Uruguay therefore welcomes the Somalia Operational Plan for pre-Famine Scale-up of Humanitarian Assistance, promoted by the Secretary-General, to mitigate the effects of the extreme drought that is ravaging the country.

At the same time, Uruguay urges President Mohamed Abdullahi Farmajo to fulfil his promise to remove obstacles to the provision of assistance, the import and export of food and vital critical supplies, and the sending of remittances, and to suspend new bureaucratic requirements at the sub-federal level imposed on aid providers. The Federal Government must make this effort in a sustained way in order to preserve stability and security in Somalia.

The plight of women and children is a source of deep concern to us, given their extreme vulnerability to the humanitarian crisis affecting the country. The Government bears the chief responsibility for ending impunity for crimes of sexual and gender-based violence. According to UNICEF and the World Health Organization, 98 per cent of women and girls in Somalia have suffered female genital mutilation, which is the highest rate in the world, despite the fact that the practice is prohibited by the Constitution of Somalia and is defined as torture. We also draw the attention to the issue of child marriage, which is still a common practice in Somalia. The Government should promote the investigation of complaints and the reintegration of victims into their communities.

With regard to Eritrea, Uruguay notes that the complete report of the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea will be submitted in the next few days, with a focus on investigations in Eritrea. We hope that the report will enlighten the Council members and provide key elements for assessing the relevance of the sanctions imposed on that country.

**Mr. Alemu** (Ethiopia): We thank Ambassador Kairat Umarov for his briefing on the activities of the Committee pursuant to resolutions 751 (1992) and 1907 (2009) concerning Somalia and Eritrea, which we found extremely useful and very well balanced. We would like to take this opportunity to congratulate him on his assumption of the chairmanship of the Committee and assure him of our full support in the effective discharge of his responsibilities. He has, in fact, already made a difference in bringing seriousness to the work and in being non-ideological. We highly appreciate his commitment to working in an open, transparent and objective manner with all the members of the Committee.

The 751 and 1907 sanctions regime has great significance for regional peace and security in the Horn of Africa, and we attach importance to its full and effective implementation. In that regard, we appreciate the fact that the Committee held a briefing session with representatives of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development on transnational terrorist threats in the region. We believe that such briefings have a lot of relevance to the work of the Committee, and we encourage the Chair to continue this good practice, in line with the mandate of the Committee, in order to create a better understanding of the challenges and threats facing the region.

No doubt, Al-Shabaab remains a potent force capable of launching asymmetrical attacks, although its conventional capabilities have been significantly weakened. Its possible links with the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh) will have enormous implications for peace and stability in the region. Therefore, this is certainly something that needs to be followed up very closely and very seriously.

We welcome the appointment of the new members of the Monitoring Group, whose work is critical to ensuring the implementation of the sanctions regime. We have been cooperating with the Group outside the Council, and we are now ready to do so in our capacity as a member of the Council and with a great sense of responsibility. We understand that the work of the Group is dependent on the relevance and quality of information gathered, and the cooperation of countries in the region and others remains very important in that

regard. We hope and expect that in the three months since they started their work, members of the Group have undertaken the necessary examination of existing and new information gathered in the course of their new mandate. In the light of reports of possible violations of the arms embargo in particular, we will wait for the Monitoring Group to inform us of the outcome of its investigation in its midterm report. Of course, forging the necessary horizontal cooperation with other panels of experts is important during the process of investigating those reports, and we trust that this has already been done in the course of the investigation.

The cooperation of Somalia, Eritrea and countries of the region is absolutely necessary to facilitating the work of the Monitoring Group and the Sanctions Committee. In that regard, we appreciate the willingness of the Federal and regional Governments in Somalia to cooperate with the Monitoring Group. We also note the submission by the Federal Government of Somalia of its report, in line with paragraph 7 of resolution 2317 (2016), on the structure, composition, strength and disposition of its security forces, including the status of regional and militia forces.

In the same vein, it is incumbent on the Ethiopian Government to render the necessary cooperation to the Monitoring Group and the Sanctions Committee based on its obligations, in line with the relevant Security Council resolutions. As the Monitoring Group has stated, for instance, it is important that Eritrea clarify the situation of the remaining soldiers identified by Djibouti as still missing in action as a result of the conflict of June 2008, in line with its treaty obligations and as directed by the Council.

We note the intention of the Chair to undertake a visit to the region, which is long overdue. It will certainly help in developing a better appreciation of regional dynamics. We hope that the visit will take place in accordance with existing practice. We want to make it clear that putting preconditions on the visit to enlist concessions from the Council should by no means be entertained, as it would set a dangerous precedent. We are confident that the Chair will handle this matter very carefully.

But the visit is important because, among other things, it would allow the Chair to appreciate the existing hubris and arrogance that have been such a problem in our region, masked behind a veneer of victimhood that may deceive many. That is the context within which the issue of the boundary demarcation should be looked at since, seen alongside other matters, it pales enormously by comparison. Delimitation having been completed, what remains is demarcation, regarding which Ethiopia cannot be expected to applaud with one hand.

Given the geopolitical situation in our region, this matter and the issue of sanctions can easily be politicized. That is why the Chair must be wise and perceptive, which we have no doubt he is. That is why we trust that he cannot determine that the link between Eritrea and Al-Shabaab has conclusively proven to be non-existent. The Monitoring Group has never made such a claim. Given the mortal danger that Al-Shabaab represents, this is not a joke. It is a serious matter.

Lastly, Ethiopia unquestionably considers this issue extremely important, and we are committed to engaging actively and constructively to support the Committee's work.

**Mr. Lambertini** (Italy): Like my colleagues before me, I would like to thank Ambassador Kairat Umarov warmly for his thorough briefing today and congratulate him on his assumption of the chairship of the Committee established pursuant to resolutions 751 (1992) and 1907 (2009) concerning Somalia and Eritrea. I do not need to elaborate here on why that Committee has so much importance for my country.

Today's briefing is taking place at a critical time for the stability of the whole of North Africa. The regional scenario is making progress, while Somalia and Eritrea remain key actors in its balance. The Security Council is called on to help realize its potential by promoting the factors that can lead to peace and stability in the region. On the fifteenth anniversary of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission's decision on the border delimitation between the two countries, we would like to note today's declaration by the European Union on the subject.

Starting with their very first statements, President Farmajo and Prime Minister Khaire have established Somalia's political priorities, all of which are relevant to the sanctions regime: national reconciliation; fighting Al-Shabaab; strengthening the capacity of the country's security forces, including the police; implementing a national plan for security strategies for preventing violent extremism; improving the management of arms and ammunition; and combating corruption.

Somalia is at a decisive crossroads on its path to reconstruction. Italy supports its legitimate aspiration to guide that reconstruction and shore up its ownership of the process, which is the cornerstone of the principle of sustaining peace endorsed by the Council last year. The Secretary-General's review of the future presence of the United Nations in the country, the joint United Nations and African Union review of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and the upcoming renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia represent an important opportunity for the Council to consolidate its path in the region.

When we look at the chief concerns of the Federal Government of Somalia about the current sanctions regime, we realize that they are largely triggered by external factors — the threat of Al-Shabaab and the related obstacles to humanitarian access in order to fight drought and famine; the presence of Da'esh; the alleged violations of the arms embargo by third States; and the alleged illegal exploitation of Somalia's fisheries and charcoal resources. On the other hand, the Somalia and Eritrea Monitoring Group has recognized that the Federal Government of Somalia has cooperated fully in the implementation of the sanctions regime and that the Somali regional authorities are improving their cooperation with the Monitoring Group and AMISOM, as was apparent in the case of the interim Juba administration in January. The Security Council can now combine Mogadishu's effort to beef up reliable security forces with benchmarks as the sanctions burden is gradually lifted. Any further progress by the Somali leadership in controlling and managing arms and ammunition should be taken into account in relation to any possible reconfiguration of the sanctions regime.

Turning to Eritrea, our position is equally clear. The Security Council will be making a holistic assessment based on the Monitoring Group's recent reports and progress updates, as required by the relevant Council resolutions. Over the past three years, the Monitoring Group has said that it has not found any evidence of Eritrea's support to Al-Shabaab. At the same time, however, the information alleging that Eritrea has supported other armed groups in the region is cause for concern. In the dispute about prisoners of war between Eritrea and Djibouti, mediated by Qatar, we saw conflicting claims about the fate of missing combatants. It is our hope that the Monitoring Group will be able to help to clarify their effective status so that the Council can reach well-grounded conclusions.

Lastly, pending the report on recommendations for a possible review of the sanctions regime on Eritrea, we expect the Monitoring Group's observations to be fair, impartial and evidence-based. To that end, we encourage Eritrea to cooperate with the Monitoring Group in order to help the Security Council make an unbiased decision on a basis of established facts.

**Mr. Fernández Revollo** (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank Ambassador Umarov, Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolutions 751 (1992) and 1907 (2009) concerning Somalia and Eritrea, and Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan, for his briefing and for his work on the Committee. We greatly value the efforts of the Somalia and Eritrea Monitoring Group, which was established to support the Committee's work. It is an essential tool for keeping the Security Council informed about the situation on the ground. It should operate with complete impartiality and respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of both countries.

The sanctions regime on Somalia and Eritrea is one of the Council's longest-running such regimes. The modifications that have been made to it have not necessarily resulted in any marked progress. In our view, the time has come to consider the effectiveness of the sanctions and whether they are worth continuing. We would like to emphasize the political advances in Somalia, of which this year's elections are proof positive of the progress that it has made in the past four years. It is vital that efforts continue to ensure that elections will also be conducted beyond the capital and that by 2020 the country will be able to count on having a one-person, one-vote system.

We continue to be very concerned about the presence of Al-Shabaab, which is still a threat to peace and security in Somalia. According to the Monitoring Group's report, that terrorist organization continues to maintain a presence in some of the most remote areas of Puntland. It is a threat not only to Somalia but to the stability of the entire region. Its presence has also been confirmed by representatives of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development. We would like to emphasize that Al-Shabaab's presence is also a threat to all the organizations that are providing humanitarian assistance in the area, thanks to the obstacles it presents to their efforts. We urge the Government of Somalia, the African Union Mission in Somalia and all international stakeholders to provide the protection that those humanitarian efforts need and

ensure that the international embargo on the export of charcoal is respected.

With regard to Eritrea, we are pleased that once again there has been no proof that its Government has given support to the terrorist group Al-Shabaab. The Security Council should take note of that and respond accordingly. As for the regional and border issues, the countries concerned should end all support to any armed or rebel groups that undermine their internal stability. We welcome Eritrea's release of four prisoners of war to Djibouti and urge both parties to continue to work through Qatar's mediation efforts to resolve their existing problems.

Bolivia hopes sincerely that the countries of the region can continue to keep in mind the overarching goal of peace and stability in the Horn of Africa and their peoples' fundamental interests. We hope they can strengthen their good-neighbourly relations, promote unity and cooperation and settle their differences through dialogue and consultation, benefiting the common interests of every country in the region. We hope that the Security Council will take into consideration the changes that have occurred on the ground, continually review the relevant provisions of its resolutions and make appropriate adjustments.

**The President**: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of the United States.

I would like to thank Ambassador Umarov for his briefing. We warmly welcome him in his new role as Chair of the Committee pursuant to resolutions 751 (1992) and 1907 (2009) concerning Somalia and Eritrea, and have full confidence in his ability to lead the Committee as it oversees the important role these sanctions play in advancing peace and security in the Horn of Africa.

I would also like to thank the Somalia-Eritrea Monitoring Group for its efforts to report on the implementation of the sanctions and to keep the Council and the Sanctions Committee informed on a range of issues affecting the Horn of Africa, including counter-Al-Shabaab efforts, corruption, piracy, international human rights and humanitarian law violations, and violations of the sanctions measures.

Turning first to Somalia, the Chairman's briefing highlighted many of the ongoing reasons why the Council must remain committed to supporting Somali efforts to pave the way towards a stable, prosperous and peaceful future. We share Ambassador Umarov's concern about the ongoing threat Al-Shabaab poses to Somalia and the region. Today, we are witnessing increasing depravity from Al-Shabaab as it intensifies its asymmetric attacks against civilian targets, security services and Government officials. We must maintain robust counter-Al-Shabaab efforts to prevent backsliding on the tentative security gains achieved in recent years.

The cycle of violence in Somalia and the region cannot be broken without good governance. We strongly support President Farmajo's and Prime Minister Khayre's focus on combatting corruption, and welcome the new Federal Government of Somalia's financial disclosure and code of conduct requirements for ministers. We are ready to lend greater support to strengthen the Federal Government's fiscal transparency and oversight efforts. We support the use of sanctions as a tool and as part of a comprehensive United Nations strategy to deter violence and corrupt activities. We welcome President Farmajo's call for security sector reform and encourage improved, transparent and inclusive governance. It is imperative that Somali resources benefit all Somalis, that Somali security services be well trained and adequately compensated, and that security forces respect human rights and be held to high standards of accountability.

On the arms embargo, we urge the Federal Government of Somalia and Member States to increase their efforts to comply with existing measures and to notify the Committee promptly when making use of the relevant exemptions when supporting Somali security sector institutions. We are particularly keen to understand more about the potential plans of a Member State to build a military base in Berbera and the discovery of 25,000 blank-firing pistols in the port of Kismaayo. We urge the Federal Government of Somalia and Member States to redouble their efforts to implement the embargo and share information in order to ensure that weapons do not fall into the hands of Al-Shabaab or others with malicious intent.

We also encourage the Joint Verification Team to continue to make progress on its important goal of improving the Federal Government of Somalia's management of weapons and ammunition. Illegal activities such as illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and illicit trade in charcoal contribute to corruption and instability in Somalia and the region. As the Chair raised in his briefing, we continue to

express our concern over illicit, unreported and unregulated fishing in Somali waters, which poses a threat to coastal communities' livelihood and food security. We welcome any Somalia-Eritrea Monitoring Group reporting on the recent uptick in piracy activity, as well as on the nexus between illicit, unreported and unregulated fishing and piracy.

On the illicit charcoal trade, while the Somalia-Eritrea Monitoring Group has reported some indication that Al-Shabaab may be shifting away from this trade, we still believe that the group is attracted to this kind of financing. Member States should remain vigilant and cooperative, and actively share information as it relates to the charcoal ban in order to more robustly enforce it.

Turning to Eritrea, the Council will have a number of serious issues on its agenda to consider as it prepares for the upcoming review of United Nations sanctions on Eritrea. These include the need for a full and transparent accounting of the whereabouts of remaining Djiboutian prisoners of war, assessing the extent of Eritrea's arms embargo violations, Eritrea's support for armed groups that seek to destabilize the region, and the extent to which Eritrea is willing to cooperate with the Somalia-Eritrea Monitoring Group.

Related to cooperation between the Somalia-Eritrea Monitoring Group and the Government of Eritrea, it will be important for the Monitoring Group to travel to Eritrea with the Chair during his proposed visit to the region. Without Eritrea's engagement with the Somalia-Eritrea Monitoring Group, including by allowing the Monitoring Group to visit Asmara, the Council will not be able to make a fully informed decision about the future of these sanctions. We believe that it is only through open dialogue here and in Asmara that we can address remaining peace and security challenges. We sincerely hope that the Government of Eritrea will seize the opportunity to take a first step towards improving engagement with the Somalia-Eritrea Monitoring Group through this proposed visit.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I now give the floor to the representative of Djibouti.

**Mr. Doualeh** (Djibouti): At the outset, Djibouti wishes to express its gratitude to the President of the Security Council for this month, the United States, and the members of the Council for this opportunity to address the Council.

Furthermore, we wish to thank Ambassador Umarov, Chairman of the Committee pursuant to resolutions 751 (1992) and 1907 (2009) concerning Somalia and Eritrea, for his briefing to the Security Council.

With respect to Somalia, we share the Chair's assessment that Al-Shabaab continues to pose a serious threat to peace and security in Somalia. It has been ramping up attacks after rejecting President Farmajo's amnesty offer. In light of the gravity and viciousness of the threat, we support the request of the Head of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) for a surge in troops to enable AMISOM forces and the Somali National Army to decisively degrade and defeat Al-Shabaab.

Likewise, we echo the call made by Secretary-General António Guterres to provide enhanced logistical support for under-equipped African Union forces in Somalia, in particular force enablers and multipliers, including helicopters. We are indeed confident that with the enhanced, sustained and coordinated support of the international community, the new Somali leadership will be able to deliver significant peace dividends to the population and improve security and access to justice.

Turning to Eritrea, we are deeply troubled and concerned by the fact that the distinct lack of cooperation that characterized previous mandates continues to date. Eritrea has deliberately chosen to obstruct the work of the Monitoring Group. It has consistently and arrogantly refused to allow the Monitoring Group to verify the facts. Instead of openly and transparently cooperating, as directed by the Council, it has slammed the door on the Group and denied it any access to the information it needs to determine whether or not Eritrea was in compliance with the Council's resolutions. In other words, Eritrea cynically seeks to be rewarded for its defiance of Security Council resolutions. It seeks just to stonewall, refuse to cooperate, prevent the missions from finding the facts and hold on until the Council is sufficiently frustrated by the failure of its actions and sufficiently troubled by the impact of its sanctions to throw up its hands in surrender.

In support of that strategy, it has formulated a victimhood narrative that may sound appealing to those who do not know the facts of the situation in the region. The facts have nevertheless come to the surface, as highlighted both in numerous Security Council monitoring reports and the report of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)

on transnational threats in the IGAD region. Conversely, Djibouti has twice welcomed experts of the Monitoring Group to Djibouti this year and has been able to share valuable information.

On Eritrea's support to Al-Shabaab, Djibouti is of the view that Eritrea continues to provide support to Al-Shabaab. It has shared information that it deems credible and verifiable with the members of the Monitoring Group.

On the prisoners of war, Eritrea should be urged to clarify the situation of 13 remaining Djiboutian prisoners of war still unaccounted for. Not only is that a requirement of the Security Council, but it is also required by the international treaty and customary law by which Eritrea is bound.

On Eritrea's compliance with the 2010 Qatar mediation agreement, the Security Council has determined that the border dispute between Djibouti and Eritrea continues to constitute a threat to international peace and security in the region. It has urged Eritrea to implement in good faith the dispositions of the accord and enter into talks with Djibouti with the ultimate objective of reaching a final and binding agreement on the border dispute, in accordance with international law. Djibouti promptly submitted to His Royal Highness the Emir of Qatar a comprehensive statement of pertinent facts and legal principles applicable to this matter. To date, seven days later, Eritrea continues to refuse to comply with the provisions of the agreement.

On Eritrea's support to armed groups, Eritrea continues to harbour, train, equip and provide logistical support to armed groups seeking to overthrow and destabilize the Government of Djibouti. It continues to do so, without an ounce of remorse, in violation of its obligations under Article 2 of the Charter of the United Nations, customary international law and its obligations under Security Council resolutions. Djibouti urges Eritrea to permanently cease and desist from such activities.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate our profound gratitude to the members of the Council for their continued vigilance and support. Indeed, no country can continuously defy the Security Council's resolutions and expect not to face the consequences of its actions.

**The President**: I now give the floor to the representative of Eritrea.

**Mr. Giorgio** (Eritrea): I would like to begin by congratulating you, Madam, on the United States assumption of the presidency of the Council for the month of April. I would like to thank the Chair of the Committee pursuant to resolutions 751 (1992) and 1907 (2009) concerning Somalia and Eritrea, His Excellency Ambassador Kairat Umarov, for his briefing and for his efforts to enhance constructive and genuine dialogue. I would like to assure the Chair of my delegation's full cooperation in the discharge of his responsibilities.

As a matter of coincidence, this open briefing of the Security Council is taking place on the very date the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission gave its final and binding ruling 15 years ago, on 13 April 2002. To the regret of many who worked hard to realize peace, Ethiopia to this date continues to occupy sovereign Eritrean territory, including the town of Badme, in violation of its treaty obligation and international law. The hope of achieving peace and security for the people of the region has been dashed, and the opportunity to build a common front for common challenges has been postponed indefinitely.

It would indeed be remiss of its duty in the maintenance of international peace and security for the Security Council to ignore the failure and refusal by one of the parties to implement a mutual agreement that it had solemnly signed, particularly when we recall that the agreement was guaranteed and witnessed by the United Nations, the African Union, the European Union, the United States and Algeria.

The Security Council is actively seized at the present time of all regional issues — including the Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia, Yemen and so on — where intra-State or inter-State conflicts have or continue to rage. But it continues to studiously avoid the Eritrea/Ethiopia conflict. The Security Council cannot continue its 15 years of inaction in the face of destabilizing acts of occupation and aggression that threaten regional peace and stability. This is not only morally and legally unacceptable, but it is increasingly evident that the simmering tension is untenable and fraught with perilous escalation.

The sanctions regime that has been imposed on Eritrea has entered its eighth year. Its negative impact on Eritrea and the Horn of Africa region cannot in any way be minimized. Clearly, the time has come — in fact, it is long overdue — to lift the sanctions on Eritrea.

In this regard, I would like to take this opportunity to highlight few a facts:

First, the sanctions on Eritrea have never been justified or motivated by a genuine desire to promote regional peace and security. While their imposition was unjustified, their continuation can be viewed only as a desire to spread crises in a region that is already suffering from conflicts. We need fewer conflicts, not more.

Secondly, the two justifications for the imposition of sanctions were Eritrea's alleged support to Al-Shabaab in Somalia and its alleged refusal to resolve its dispute with Djibouti. For four years, the Somalia-Eritrea Monitoring Group has found no evidence of any Eritrean wrongdoing in Somalia.

Thirdly, with respect to Djibouti, Eritrea remains committed to the mediation of the State of Qatar, which has resulted in the release of all Djiboutian prisoners of war. The latest monitoring report made it clear that all interlocutors only mention seven prisoners of war in Eritrea. These are all accounted for — two escapees, one who passed away and four who were released through the efforts of Qatar. Eritrea has confirmed that there are no more Djiboutian prisoners in its hands. Moreover, Eritrea cannot be asked to second-guess the whereabouts of persons missing in action, as claimed by Djibouti. The burden of proof lies squarely on the accuser, the Government of Djibouti. On its part, Eritrea is committed to resolving any outstanding issue with Djibouti under the mediation of Qatar.

Fourthly, failing to find substantive evidence to continue the sanctions, some countries have resorted to procedural pretexts by singularly and inordinately focusing on the inability of the Monitoring Group to visit Eritrea. It must be recalled here that the Monitoring Group has actually visited Eritrea twice on previous occasions. The Monitoring Group also maintains, without any hindrance, extensive meetings and contacts with relevant Eritrean officials. As Council members are aware, the Monitoring Group has itself ascertained the absence of any indication of Eritrea's support to Al-Shabaab. In the circumstances, Eritrea does not see any added value in a visit by the Monitoring Group to the country. Eritrea's primary preoccupation is in fact the public stance of certain countries that have openly stated that they would not support the lifting of the sanctions even if the Group were to visit Eritrea.

Eritrea wishes once again to reaffirm its commitment to sustainable peace and cooperation in the region. Eritrea will continue to make its positive contribution to regional peace, stability and security in the Horn of Africa and the Red Sea area. In that connection, Eritrea reiterates call on the Security Council to contribute to regional peace, cooperation and amity by lifting the unjustified sanctions and by ensuring Ethiopia's withdrawal from sovereign Eritrean territory.

*The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.*